

Najib: Scrap them unless projects kick off promptly

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PEKAN: Contractors involved in government projects have been instructed not to have ground-breaking ceremonies unless they are sure that work on the projects can start immediately.

The contractors and project managers also need to make sure their work proceeds continuously until the project is completed.

The directive came from Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak who was concerned over public perception if a project does not take off after the ground-breaking ceremony.

"If we have a (ground-breaking) ceremony and the project does not start, the public will view this seriously," he said after the launching of the first phase of University Malaysia Pahang (UMP) campus at Kuala Pahang near here yesterday.

Also present were Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and UMP vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Mohamed Said Mat Lela.

Groundwork for the campus began in June 2003 but it was only completed recently.

Work on the first phase of the campus, which costs RM161 million, is expected to be completed within two years. It will be able to accommodate 4,000 students.

The second phase of the



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak (second from right) looking at the model of the University Malaysia Pahang campus. With him are (from left) vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Mohamed Said Mat Lela, Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob.

project is expected to start by 2010 and, when completed, would enable the university to accommodate 20,000 students.

UMP, known as Kolej Universiti Kejuruteraan & Teknologi Malaysia (Kuktem) until February this year, currently has 4,000 students at its temporary campus in Gambang, Kuantan.

Najib said the government had made it a priority to increase student intake in institutes of higher learning to give equal opportunities for all Malaysians to further their studies.

"We hope to increase the number of tertiary students from 32 per cent to 40 per cent by 2010."

On unemployment, especially among graduates, Najib said several steps had been taken, including efforts to speed-up enrolment to fill up vacancies in the civil service.

He also said the continuous efforts to expand the economy through investments could see an increase in job opportunities in the information and communication technology sectors.

Special training programmes for undergraduates, like those organised with the help of information technology companies such as Infosys and Microsoft, would be in-

creased. Undergraduates who had undergone such programmes found it easier to secure jobs and were paid 30 per cent more than their peers.

Later, at the opening ceremony of a unity and knowledge sharing programme, organised by the Armed Forces Religious Corps at Felcra Seri Makmur near here, Najib attributed disunity and lack of knowledge as the main rea-

sons why Muslims could not progress and compete with others.

"There are about 1.4 billion Muslims all over the world but they cannot even match the power and influence of smaller communities like the Jews."

To overcome the problem, Najib said Muslims must strengthen their unity and should always pursue knowledge.